



Tuolumne County Veterans Service Office

Eric Larson
Veterans Service Officer
Beth Barnes
Senior Veterans Representative
Michelle McMaster
Veterans Representative

August 12, 2010

Honorable Eric L. DuTemple
Presiding Judge
Tuolumne Superior Court
2 South Green St.
Sonora, CA. 95370

Re: Veterans Services Office Response to Grand Jury
Recommendations

Dear Judge DuTemple:

Grand Jury Findings

1. The office is staffed by two (2) full time people with one (1) part time fill in. At the time of the preparation of this report, one full time employee was out on disability. This creates a heavy case load as the office does accept walk in clients. Hiring of additional personnel is difficult at this time due to both budget constraints and the complexities of the data base systems coupled with the security requirements to safeguard personal data. Additionally, training and certification to access these systems is a long, time consuming period taking approximately nine months from start to finish.

Response: Agree

2. As with every service organization, there are customers who are dissatisfied with the service. However, the vast majority of customers seem to be very pleased with the services received. The services provided include, but are not limited to, determining possible eligibility for benefits, helping fill out forms for claims, and helping fill out forms for appeals if claims are denied.

Response: Agree

3. There appears to be a general lack of public awareness of not just the services Veterans Services Office offers, but even the existence of such an office.

Response: Disagree. While the public in general who are not veterans may not be aware of the services of the Veterans Services Office, the majority of veterans who have earned benefits are aware of the office and its staff. A veteran who has been out of the service a number of years and has no medical needs or disabilities would not be seeking benefits from the Veterans Administration. Those who do need benefits frequently seek out other veterans through veterans' services organizations, all of whom are well aware of the Tuolumne County Veterans Services office. The office even receives clients from other counties who have heard of the high quality service provided by the staff of the Veterans Services office.

Grand Jury Recommendations

1. For finding 1, it is recommended at least one (1), if not two (2), additional people be hired as soon as budget constraints allow. This will serve multiple purposes. First, it will lower the case load for the fully qualified personnel as the new people will be able to handle the simpler day to day office work. Second, there will be time to get the new personnel fully trained and certified to cover all aspects of the operation during vacations or other absences.

Response: It has not been implemented, but the VSO will request that it be implemented in the future. The VSO will request additional staffing in future budgets. Financial circumstances and competing priorities may preclude the Board from being able to provide the funding for this additional staffing.

2. As no one can mandate satisfaction, there is no formal recommendation for Finding 2.

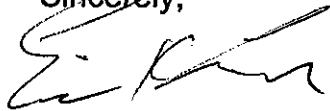
Response: Agree

3. As stated in Finding 3, every effort should be made to make for the use of Public Service announcements in the local media including the internet to make the general public, as well as veterans, more aware of the services provided by the Veterans Services office. With increased awareness, more

veterans and their families can and will be helped. This help will, in some small way, thank the veterans and their families for the sacrifices made during their service.

Response: It has not been implemented but will be implemented in the future. During fiscal year FY 2010/2011 with full staff available the Veterans Service office will redouble its public relations efforts. Additional public service articles will be written and an attempt will be made to get on the local radio.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric K. Larson", written over a horizontal line.

Eric K. Larson
Veterans Services Officer